

monograph begins with a description of modern Utrök, with its principal settlement on largest islet in atoll. This is followed by a discussion of the archaeological surveys on each islet, coupled with brief oral histories of each regarding traditional land divisions and known modern and historical uses of the islets. Unfortunately, these discussions are also periodically interspersed with phrases like, "... it is obvious. . .," without an established context or sufficient data to clarify this "obvious" observation. Mostly though, Weisler is able to set up a firm foundation in understanding prehistoric and traditional settlement patterns, recognizing that both the past and present patterns of occupation are strongly influenced by islet size and the ability of each land-mass to sustain and sufficiently recharge its underlying fresh water lens.

Each succeeding chapter took on a specific aspect of the archaeological work, from excavation to the analyses involving chronology and landscape changes, marine and terrestrial subsistence, horticultural systems, and material culture.

The last chapter is an attempt to be integrative, providing a synthesis of each principle research domain. What emerges is a picture of a strong, pioneering lot; a highly resourceful people able to maintain a continuous 2,000 year occupation sustained by the bounty of the oceans as well as the sparse products of both introduced and endemic plants such as coconut, pandanus, arrowroot and giant swamp taro. Here was a people accustomed and well-adapted to thrive on the sparse resources they would encounter at virtually any of the low islands of this group. Here was a people who placed their survival on a reliance of traditional social and political organization, traditional patterns of land division and resource allocation, various food preparation and storage practices, a material culture industry derived from the local products of the lagoon, and perhaps even participation in an inter-island/atoll exchange network. In essence, here was a people who understood the need for long-term sustainable management of resources and how to survive within a marginal environment.

There are only a couple of rough edges to this exposition, and one in particular with which I take umbrage – the bald assumption that the founding settlers established swidden gardens upon their immediate arrival, as if to pass the time and fulfill their subsistence needs until their taro gardens began producing. This position assumes there were no other alternative foods available, such as stored or preserved taro and other foods that may have been transported with these intrepid explorers. It also assumes there were no endemic stands of coconut, pandanus, and other resources that could have been recruited into the human subsistence regimen. It is as if the atoll environment was barren of any suitable, nutritious and subsistence-ready resources. But was it really? Unfortunately, there have been a very limited number of investigations into the pre-human environment on islands and atolls in the Pacific, and many of these are inconclusive.

For Weisler, the mere presence of charcoal dispersed within a buried A-horizon is sufficient to establish the presence of a slash-and-burn system of gardening, especially if that charcoal infused soil is later buried during excavation of formal arid pits. But, where is the evidence – if the charcoal was the result of land clearance for swidden gardens, what plants were

sown? Is it possible the charcoal was the result of clearing in preparation for the taro gardens? Are there other explanations (natural or cultural) that could account for the presence of charcoal? Why does a colonizing group upon arrival race to the interior of an islet and begin a swidden garden system, especially when they are faced with a new and unfamiliar landscape? Comparatively speaking, this is a small complaint that really reflects my own concerns with settlement discussions in the Pacific. From the perspective of the overall character of the monograph, it is minor, very minor indeed, and should not detract from the fluid quality of the contents.

Weisler is among the ground-breakers here. *On the Margins of Sustainability* adds one more small tessera to the overall mosaic of early settlement in the central Pacific. It is the second book to be published about the series of atolls investigated under this overall project. The first, Wujae (Ujae) Atoll in the center of the archipelago, was published in 1999 by the Smithsonian Institution as *Atoll Research Bulletin 460*. The other two atolls, Maloelap and Epoon in the center and wet south of the archipelago respectively, have yet to be completed. The remaining series is anxiously awaited by this archaeologist.

### Easter Island

Michael Kenna, 2001 Nazraeli Press, 53 pages, \$75.00  
ISBN: 1-59005-012-6 First Edition limited to a 1000 slip-cased numbered copies

*Review by Tom Christopher*

Of all the photography books of Easter Island I have seen, this compilation of 44 photographs by Michael Kenna is by far the best. Frances Sagnes' *I'le de Pâques* finishes a beautiful but distant second.

Kenna's photographs are from two trips in 2000 and 2001 and are in black and white, 8" x 8" format. They fully capture the feeling of the "savage brooding melancholy" that Easter Island held for John Dos Passos. In addition to portraying this feeling, the photographs provide a real sense of the physical geography of the island. In Plate 3, *Seven Horses*, Iti Maunga, Plate 5, *Eyes of Water*, Rano Kau Volcano or Plate 41, *Poike Cliffs and Motu Marotiri*, Hanga Nui, the viewer is given a perspective of the island that I have not seen, other than in person. The eight landscape/seascapes with no man-made objects in sight provide one with a frame of reference to view the *moai* studies.

The other rather unique feature of this volume is that great importance is given to the *moai* that have not been re-erected, but lie where they fell or were left by their creators. I especially like Plate 20, *Moai, Study 30*, Hanga Poukura, showing only the eroded back of a *moai*, seemingly sinking back into the land. I purchased my copy at a book signing and talk hosted by the Halstead Gallery, Birmingham, Michigan on December 8, 2001. I have to say that as wonderful as the photos in the book are, they pale when compared to the actual photos, which are limited to forty copies. You can view all of them on Michael Kenna's website: [www.michaelkenna.net](http://www.michaelkenna.net). A second edition will be forthcoming.